

ART. IV.—CHINA'S CHAPTER IN CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

THE history of Christianity has in no small part been determined by the soil of Jewish religion, Greek culture, and Roman administration into which the seed of the new faith was dropped. But it was after Judaism had failed to achieve salvation for her people through the moral law, after Greece had failed to secure salvation for her people through philosophy and art, and after Rome had failed to secure the salvation of her people through the organization of government, that Christ came. Many chapters on Christian evidences have been based on the inspired statement, "When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son." There are two ways in which China will furnish a stronger chapter of Christian evidences to the modern world than Greece, Rome, or Judea furnished to the ancient church. In the first place, China furnishes the modern world a more widely extended and, upon the whole, a better type of heathen civilization than the civilization of either Greece or Rome; and, in the second place, owing to the clearer comprehension of the meaning of Christianity and a clearer view of Christian ideals now prevailing, China's failure is even more marked than that of her predecessors.

1. Chinese government and civilization have extended from B. C. 2953 to A. D. 1905—four thousand eight hundred and fifty-eight years, as compared with the twelve hundred and twenty-nine years from the founding of Rome until the fall of the Roman empire. The casual student of history will recognize that Chinese civilization has outlasted that of Greece and Rome. Again, the Chinese government embraces a vastly larger number of people than the governments of Greece, Rome, and Judea combined. In a word, the Chinese empire has endured some four times as long and has embraced some four or five times as many people as the empire of Rome. Judged by the test of the survival of the fittest, therefore, Chinese civilization is superior to that of Rome. If we turn to the quality of the civilization developed some readers will affirm that, if not Roman government, at least Greek art and philosophy and literature are vastly superior to those in China.

But is it not at least striking that neither Greece nor Rome had enough of the leaven of righteousness to preserve the nation, and that only as Greek art and eloquence and Roman government were taken up by people of more moral stamina than the inhabitants of the southern peninsulas of Europe did they continue to influence the human race? Upon the other hand, the Chinese ethics has at least developed a sufficient degree of morality to preserve her people for five thousand years. It may well be doubted, therefore, whether, in the influence of her civilization on the masses, Greece or Rome has equaled China. A study of particular features in their civilizations only confirms this view. Slavery was more general and inhuman in Greece and Rome than in China; Plato's estimate of man is lower than that of Confucius; lying and cheating are not taught to China's millions as they were taught to Greek children; and both immorality and corruption were more prevalent in the Greek and Roman world than in the Chinese empire. If, therefore, we compare the duration, the extent, or the quality of the Chinese civilization with that of Greece or Rome we shall find that China has excelled those proud nations in her influence upon the common people and in the number of human beings who have been molded by her. China is unaided human nature at her best; nay, we suspect that China has received more fully than her ancient competitors "the true light, which lighteth every man coming into the world."

2. But, while China has given perhaps the highest illustration of what human nature under paganism can accomplish, her failure is so marked as to furnish the strongest proof, by the scientific test of experiment, that there is no mastery without the Master. In Yokohama and at Shanghai you are shocked to find yourself hauled in jinrikishas drawn by men, not driven to a hotel in a carriage; but Shanghai, Peking, and Canton are in advance of all other parts of China, where you are carried in chairs on the shoulders of men. The custom of men serving as beasts of burden is so degrading that one cannot blame the police of New York for refusing to carry Li Hung Chang up to General Grant's tomb. But chair-carrying is among the lightest labors of workingmen. Throughout southern China, especially, stone and timber for build-

ing are carried and all labor is performed by hand. If mud largely takes the place of other building material, even that is mixed by hand. The fields are dug up and cultivated by men and women, and all produce is carried to market on human shoulders, because, in the hard struggle for existence, men and women can do more work and live on less food than horses and cattle. If the water buffalo is an exception it is because the water buffalo is saved for its labor, for its milk, and for its flesh. It is only in this threefold service that the water buffalo holds its own with man. The most depressing sight in China is that of men, women, and children turning themselves into beasts of burden and doing the work of animals, of steam, and of electricity. There is no mastery of the forces of nature without the Master. There is no mastery of the mind without the Master. Dr. Martin, a standard authority, estimates that not more than five or ten per cent of the men and not one in ten thousand of the women of China can read and write. The instruction is so crude that each Chinese boy must study the characters for two or three years before he knows what a single one of them means. The Chinese student who boasts that he can read and write may not know the meaning of what he is reading any more than an American boy can tell the meaning of Latin words which he can spell out and pronounce because they are written in our alphabet. This barren education leads to such pride as closes the mind of the Chinese scholar to all knowledge of the world in which he lives, and leads him to sit in idleness while his father and mother toil in the field for his support. There is no moral and spiritual mastery without the Master. Lying and cheating, although not taught to the children in China as among the Greeks, are nevertheless universal. A telephone put into a yamen at Chentu has been taken out because the men who talked over the telephone would deny to the official's face the statements made over the wire. The telephone must await the moral development of the people. The five relations of Confucius—those of emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, friend and friend—fail to recognize God, or the individual, or nature. They thus fail to develop personality, upon the one side, or the control of the forces of nature

upon the other. The four relations of Christianity, embodied in the commands to love God with all one's heart, one's neighbor as one's self, to become perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect, and to exercise dominion over nature, develop personality and insure human progress. Monotheism was revealed to us not in the interests of God, but for the sake of humanity. So long as man believed that there were many gods in the world upon whose favor his happiness depended, there was conflict between the appetites and the instincts of the individual, and the development of any consistent personality was impossible. It was only when man recognized one God, and he a God of righteousness and holiness, that the growth of personal character became possible. So it has been said that personality was born with Christ and born again in the time of the Reformation. It was only when Christ revealed God as man's Father, commanded us to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, and revealed to us our immortal destiny, that men and women became strong enough to face martyrdom by the ten thousand for the sake of their convictions.

As over against these infinite incentives to moral progress in Christianity, Confucianism left the Chinese in atheism or agnosticism, which paralyzes moral growth. The highest incentive which Buddhism holds out to the man struggling for virtue is an escape from all existence. Taoism, in its attempt to supply these defects, has brought the Chinese face to face, not with a personal God, a God of righteousness and holiness, but with demons. Hence the Chinese believe in the disembodied spirits of their ancestors, and especially in evil spirits. They will keep their dead in their homes for months, if need be, until the priests report a favorable location and a favorable time for burial. They cannot build a house unless the priests report that the "Feng-shui," the spirits of air and water, are favorable. They pierce the boy's ear and insert a ring, and dress him like a girl, in order that they may deceive the evil spirits who will seek his life rather than that of his sister. They build walls in front of gates or doors in order that the evil spirits may be turned aside. In sickness they resort to the rudest appliances, and torment the patient with hideous noises, and pierce him with needles, in order that they may drive out the evil spirits which are

supposed to be the cause of the disease. In the case of a bitter quarrel the injured person sometimes will kill himself in order that he may become a demon and torment his enemy for the rest of his life; and the enemy is so fearful of such torment that he is also often driven to suicide. A people among whom slavery and concubinage, those twin relics of barbarism, still exist; a nation among whom less than ten per cent of the men and not one woman in ten thousand can read and write; a nation among whom a single newspaper, issued weekly, with a circulation of four hundred copies, sufficed for four hundred million people; a people who discovered the mariner's compass, the arts of printing and of making gunpowder, but who were wholly ignorant of the use of modern arts and inventions until they were taught them by the Christian world; a people working twelve to fourteen hours a day for a bare living from the age of seven until they drop into the grave; a people too unreliable to gather statistics, whose condition can only be estimated, but perhaps one half of whom are forced to live on two cents a day; a people the flower of whose manhood to the number of some thirty or forty million is using opium, and the flower of whose womanhood to the number of some seventy-five million sit with bound feet groaning with pain from injuries inflicted for life; a people whose criminal law is shocking in its harshness and whose political administration is abominable in its corruption; a people living in constant dread of demons and whose highest hope in death is extinction—surely one fourth of the human race so demoralized by Satan is the strongest proof presented to the modern world of the degradation of sin and of the inability of unaided human nature to save itself. The next chapter in Christian evidences will consist in the contrast, under the scientific test of experiment, between Chinese civilization, the highest type of unaided moral culture, and the Christian civilization of the twentieth century—the yet imperfect product of the coming of Christ to earth.

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